

described and now serves as a recognized example of a fully integrated domestic violence court system.<sup>51</sup>

California also indicates a significant effort in the establishment of domestic violence courts. A 2000 report indicated that there were 39 domestic violence courts in the State although the “[c]ourts throughout the state have responded to the challenge of domestic violence cases in a variety of different ways, making it difficult to identify only one model or definition of domestic violence courts”.<sup>52</sup> The California definition of “domestic violence courts” is simply “those courts that assign judicial officers to hear a special domestic violence calendar, regardless of whether the judicial officers hear those cases exclusively or as part of a mixed assignment”.<sup>53</sup> In the Los Angeles area, the first Domestic Violence Court began operations in 1993 at the Long Beach Courthouse. The County now also claims to have domestic violence courts at the El Monte Courthouse, West Covina Courthouse, Pomona Courthouse and the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles.<sup>54</sup>

Clearly the most tangible addition to the stock of domestic violence courts has occurred in Chicago. Cook County built a separate \$51 million Domestic Violence

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<sup>51</sup> Mazur, Robyn and Liberty Aldrich, “What Makes a Domestic Violence Court Work: Lessons From New York”, *The Judges' Journal*, American Bar Association, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 2003). Available online at [www.communitycourts.org/uploads/documents/whatmakesdvcourtwork.pdf](http://www.communitycourts.org/uploads/documents/whatmakesdvcourtwork.pdf) (last visited January 14, 2007); Wolf, Robert and Liberty Aldrich and Samantha Moore, “Planning a Domestic Violence Court: The New York state Experience”, Center for Court Innovation, 2004. Available online at <http://www.communitycourts.org/uploads/documents/dvplanningdiary.pdf> (last visited January 14, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> “Domestic Violence Courts: A Descriptive Study”, Judicial Council of California Administrative Office of the Courts, May 2000. Available online at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/dvreport.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/dvreport.pdf) (last visited January 14, 2007)

<sup>53</sup> Id at p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Superior Court of Los Angeles web site, [www.lasuperiorcourt.org/criminal/domesticviolence.htm](http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org/criminal/domesticviolence.htm) (last visited January 14, 2007).

Courthouse.<sup>55</sup> The courthouse opened in October of 2005. It houses a fully integrated domestic violence court that hears all civil and criminal calls for orders of protections, and for misdemeanors, felonies, and preliminary hearings in felony domestic violence cases. It is an impressive facility with 10 handicapped accessible courtrooms, full audio-visual capabilities, significant courthouse security, a "Victim Support Area", and a childcare facility.

In New Jersey, although no specific domestic courts are listed in the table the State has taken a different approach. New Jersey employs a system utilizing a "Domestic Violence Hearing Officer (DVHO)" to allow trained hearing officers to hear most requests for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) at the Superior Court Family Part. A Superior Court Family Part Judge must review DVHO recommendations and if approved, the recommendations are incorporated into a TRO signed by a judge. The DVHO program began as a pilot program in 1993 in Hudson and Ocean counties, it became statewide in 1998. Presently, 17 out of New Jersey's 21 counties have a DVHO.<sup>56</sup>

Other states are considering or already using innovative technological approaches. For example, in Michigan legislation has been proposed that would allow domestic violence court judges to order offenders to wear GPS devices that send alarms to their accusers if the defendant approaches.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Cook County Holds Grand Opening for New Domestic Violence Courthouse", Cook County Information center, September 29, 2005. Online at [http://www.co.cook.il.us/Media/05\\_releases/ccpr\\_092905.htm](http://www.co.cook.il.us/Media/05_releases/ccpr_092905.htm) (last visited January 14, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> "New Jersey Domestic Violence Information and Initiatives", New Jersey Family Practice Division. Online at [www.judiciary.state.nj.us/family/dv.htm](http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/family/dv.htm) (last visited January 14, 2007)

<sup>57</sup> "Domestic violence victims could get GPS alert system", *Lansing (Michigan) State Journal*, February 13, 2007. And more generally on the issue of using technology, see "Key Principles of Domestic Violence Court: Accountability", *Center for Court Innovation*, online at <http://www.courtinnovation.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Document.viewDocument&documentID=596&documentTopicID=23&documentTypeID=10> (last visited February 23, 2007)

It should be noted however that domestic violence courts are still opposed by some people from a broad range of perspectives. Where the model is limited to personal protection orders or misdemeanors, some victim advocates complain that it is ineffective and that the therapeutic approach does not adequately protect victims.<sup>58</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, some still maintain that domestic violence courts encourage biased judges who do not respect the constitutional rights accorded to defendants in other types of assault cases.<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding that opposition, there is evidence that the special attention to domestic assaults, through domestic violence courts and otherwise, is having the desired effect of reducing the recidivism of batterers and therefore protecting women from assaults.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

The tangible concept of a specialized domestic violence court has now been with us for well over 15 years. Although regarded as part of the therapeutic or problem-solving court genre, it has features, particularly its emphasis on victim safety rather than offender rehabilitation, which distinguish it from other courts.

As the domestic court idea has grown from its roots in the feminist legal movement, it has taken many forms or models as its implementation has taken place in a “piecemeal” fashion around the country. The crucial infusion of federal funds for the establishment of such courts was done in a way that resulted in the development of

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<sup>58</sup> “Our DV Court: A Deceptive Dangerous Sham” complains the Women’s Justice Center of Santa Rosa, California on its website at [www.justicewomen.com/cj\\_dv\\_court\\_sham.html](http://www.justicewomen.com/cj_dv_court_sham.html) (last visited February 22, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> See “Bias in the Judiciary: The Case of Domestic Violence”, by a group calling itself “Respect Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting” at [www.mediadar.org/docs/Bias-In-The-Judiciary.pdf](http://www.mediadar.org/docs/Bias-In-The-Judiciary.pdf) (last visited February 22, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Ventura, Lois A. and Gabrielle Davis (2005) “Domestic Violence: Court Case Conviction and Recidivism”, 11 *Violence Against Women* 255-277.



alternative models in various locales. Some of these models have been fairly timid in approach while others have been much more aggressive. The development of integrated domestic violence courts in New York, which brings together many of the various legal aspects of domestic violence, has perhaps proven to be one of the most successful forms.

The piecemeal nature of the growth of domestic violence courts has also resulted in the lack of a comprehensive source identifying those courts and their various features. The Keilitz study in 2000 was the last published list of operating domestic violence courts. A working grant from the Department of Justice to the Center for Court Innovation will hopefully produce a comprehensive study list of all domestic violence courts in the country but the results of that study are not likely to be available until 2008. In the meantime this project focused on a more immediate identification of the changes that have taken place in our stock of domestic violence courts since 2000. The results of that effort are contained in the following Appendix.

**Appendix:**  
**Domestic Violence Courts in the United States – 2007**

## Domestic Violence Courts in the United States – 2007

Hon. Donald E. Shelton

State	Court	Web Site Links , Status and Comments
Alabama	<i>Jefferson County Circuit Court</i> 716 Richard Arrington, Jr. Blvd North Birmingham, Alabama 35203	<a href="http://www.birminghambar.org/jefferson_circuit.cfm">www.birminghambar.org/jefferson_circuit.cfm</a> and see <a href="http://www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1168337742231690.xml&amp;coll=2">www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1168337742231690.xml&amp;coll=2</a>
Arizona	Tucson City Court P.O. Box 27210 Tucson, AZ 85926-7210	<a href="http://www.tucsonaz.gov/courts/">http://www.tucsonaz.gov/courts/</a> “mixed caseload with special dv calendar” Sent email inquiry
	Phoenix Municipal Court 400 North 7th Street Phoenix, AZ 85006	<a href="http://phoenix.gov/COURT/index.html">http://phoenix.gov/COURT/index.html</a> “mixed caseload with special dv calendar” Sent email inquiry
	<i>Maricopa County Superior Court</i>	<a href="http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/justiceCourts/Info/domesticviolence.asp">http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/justiceCourts/Info/domesticviolence.asp</a> comprehensive online instructions and forms see <a href="http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/familyCourt/opTour/index.asp">http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/familyCourt/opTour/index.asp</a> but apparently no special dv calendar but all protection orders are handled separately by family court judges
	<i>Pinal County Superior Court</i> P.O. Box 2547 Florence, Az 85232	<a href="http://www.co.pinal.az.us/SupCourt/">http://www.co.pinal.az.us/SupCourt/</a> Type - Domestic Violence with related caseload. Single judge assigned.
California	Alameda County Superior Court Berkeley Courthouse 2120 Martin Luther King Jr. Way Berkeley, CA 94704	<a href="http://www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/courts">www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/courts</a>
	King County Superior Court 1400 W. Lacey Blvd. Hanford, CA 93230	<a href="http://www.metrokc.gov/kcsc">www.metrokc.gov/kcsc</a>
	San Francisco Superior Court Unified Family Court 400 McAllister St., Dept 405 San Francisco. CA 94102	<a href="http://www.sfgov.org/site/courts_index.asp">www.sfgov.org/site/courts_index.asp</a>
	San Francisco Superior Court 851 Bryant Street San Francisco, CA 94103	

State	Court	Web Site Links , Status and Comments
California (continued)	San Diego Superior Court East County Division 250 East Main Street El Cajon, CA 92020	
	Sonoma County Superior Court 600 Administration Drive Room 209-J Santa Rosa, CA 95403	<a href="http://www.sonomasuperiorcourt.com">www.sonomasuperiorcourt.com</a>
	Santa Barbara County Superior Court 118 East Figueroa Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101	<a href="http://www.sbcourts.org">www.sbcourts.org</a>
	Riverside County Superior Court 4100 Main Street Riverside, CA 92501	<a href="http://www.courts.co.riverside.ca.us/">www.courts.co.riverside.ca.us/</a>
	Yolo County Superior Court 725 Court Street, Room 308 Woodland, CA 95695	<a href="http://www.yolocourts.com/">www.yolocourts.com/</a>
	Sacramento County Superior Court 120 9th Street Sacramento, CA 95814	<a href="http://www.saccourt.com/criminal/dv_court/domviolence.asp">www.saccourt.com/criminal/dv_court/domviolence.asp</a>
	Fresno County Superior Court 61 9 N Street Sanger, CA 93657	<a href="http://www.fresnosuperiorcourt.org/">www.fresnosuperiorcourt.org/</a>
	Los Angeles County Superior Court <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 415 West Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802</li> <li>• 11234 East Valley Blvd., El Monte, CA 91731</li> <li>• 1427 West Covina Parkway, West Covina, CA 91790</li> <li>• 400 Civic Center Plaza, Pomona, CA 91766</li> <li>• 111 North Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org/criminal/domesticviolence.htm">www.lasuperiorcourt.org/criminal/domesticviolence.htm</a>
Colorado	Denver County Court 1437 Bannock Street, Room 108 Denver, CO 80202-5301	Handles all protection orders in a single court dedicated to that purpose. 2005 annual report - <a href="http://www.denvergov.org/admin/template3/forms/DCCAnnRpt05.pdf">http://www.denvergov.org/admin/template3/forms/DCCAnnRpt05.pdf</a>



State	Court	Web Site Links , Status and Comments
Colorado (continued)	<i>Nineteenth Judicial District (Weld County) P.O. Box 2038 915 10th Street Greeley, Colorado 80632</i>	NEW – dedicated docket of single judge handling misdemeanors and protection orders <a href="http://www.courts.state.co.us/district/19th/judges/19maghoskins.htm">http://www.courts.state.co.us/district/19th/judges/19maghoskins.htm</a>
Connecticut	Connecticut Superior Court Judicial District Courthouse 1061 Main Street Bridgeport, CT 06604	<a href="http://www.jud.ct.gov/external/super/spsess.htm">http://www.jud.ct.gov/external/super/spsess.htm</a> The Connecticut Judicial Branch now operates family violence dockets in Waterbury, Bridgeport, Stamford and New Haven. “Dockets that handle domestic violence cases using a vertical case management approach. Teams comprised of prosecutors, family relations counselors, domestic violence victim advocates, and representatives of law enforcement coordinate case processing through regular meetings. Defendants are required to return to court frequently to ensure that they are following court orders.” Criminal model
	<i>Superior Court Judicial District &amp; G.A. 1 123 Hoyt Street Stamford, CT 06905</i>	
	<i>Superior Court Judicial District Courthouse 235 Church Street New Haven, CT 06510</i>	
	<i>Superior Court Judicial District Courthouse 300 Grand Street Waterbury, CT 06702</i>	
Delaware	Family Court of the State of Delaware 704 King Street, Second Floor Wilmington, DE 19801	<a href="http://courts.delaware.gov/Courts/Family%20Court">http://courts.delaware.gov/Courts/Family%20Court</a> Unified State Court system provides for a “Family Court” with extensive jurisdiction over all domestic relations matter, including “intrafamily misdemeanors, misdemeanor crimes against children, and civil domestic violence protective orders.”
	<i>New Castle County Family Court 500 North King Street Wilmington, DE 19801</i>	
	<i>Kent County Family Court 400 Court Street Dover, DE 19901</i>	



State	Court	Web Site Links , Status and Comments
Delaware (continued)	<i>Sussex County Family Court</i> 22 The Circle Georgetown, DE 19947	
Florida	16th Judicial Circuit - Upper Keys 53 High Point Road Tavernier, FL 33070	Florida has what it calls a “Unified Family Court” <a href="http://www.flcourts.org/gen_public/family/familycourts.shtml">http://www.flcourts.org/gen_public/family/familycourts.shtml</a> Pursuant to legislative action, the Florida Supreme Court has required every circuit to establish a family court <a href="http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/pre2004/bin/sc00-1410.pdf">http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/pre2004/bin/sc00-1410.pdf</a> Each of the local courts has adopted its own version, subject to approval by the Supreme Court. Common to all is separate jurisdiction over protection orders. The Court urged local court to assign such cases to a single judge but did not require it. The inclusion of misdemeanor criminal domestic violence cases to the discretion of each local court. There are 20 circuit courts in Florida. It appears that each has a “domestic relation” or “family court” docket but there is no uniformity as to the assignment of single judges to hear protection orders. The more populous circuits such as the 9 <sup>th</sup> (Orlando) have separate domestic relations courts with separately assigned judges who preside over protection order matters. <a href="http://www.ninja9.org">http://www.ninja9.org</a>
	16th Judicial Circuit - Middle Keys 53 Highpoint Road Tavernier, FL 33070	
	17th Judicial Circuit Court Broward County 201 SE 6th St., Room 565 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301	
	16th Judicial Circuit-Lower Keys 500 Whitehead Street Key West, FL 32040	
	6th Judicial Circuit Court West Pasco Judicial Center 7530 Little Road New Port Richey, FL 34654	
	7th Judicial Circuit Court 125 E. Orange Ave., Suite 300 Daytona Beach, FL 321 14	

State	Court	Web Site Links , Status and Comments
Florida (continued)	9 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court Domestic Relations Court 425 North Orange Ave., Rm. 320 Orlando, FL 32801	
	Second Judicial Circuit Court PO. Box 726 Tallahassee, FL 32302	
	8th Judicial Circuit Court Alachua County Courthouse 201 E. University Ave., Suite 400 Gainesville, FL 32601	
	11 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court Lawson E. Thomas Courthouse Center 175 N.W. 1st Avenue Miami, Florida 33128	<p>The 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit (Miami, Dade County) appears to be the only circuit that has established an integrated domestic violence court model with a “Domestic Violence Division, in which criminal domestic violence-related misdemeanors and injunction violation cases, as well as civil orders of protection (temporary and permanent domestic and repeat violence injunctions) are heard.”</p> <p><a href="http://www.jud11.flcourts.org/about_the_court/judicial_circuit_overview.htm">http://www.jud11.flcourts.org/about_the_court/judicial_circuit_overview.htm</a></p> <p>“The Unified Family Court staff researches the cases in the circuit wide database system to determine if any additional Domestic Relations, Dependency, Delinquency, Domestic Violence, and/or related Criminal cases exist. If a matter qualifies for transfer to Unified Family Court, a Transfer Order will be prepared for signature by the appropriate Complex Litigation Division Judge, and the parties will be noticed to appear before the designated Complex Litigation Division Judge.”</p> <p><a href="http://www.jud11.flcourts.org/programs_and_services/unified_family_court.htm">http://www.jud11.flcourts.org/programs_and_services/unified_family_court.htm</a></p>
	13 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court 800 E. Twiggs St., Room 602 Tampa, Florida 33602	<p>The 13<sup>th</sup> Circuit (Tampa, Hillsborough County) has a separate panel of family court judges who hear protection orders as part of the family docket but has also assigned two other judges to hear domestic violence criminal misdemeanors.</p> <p><a href="http://www.fljud13.org/divisions_circuitunifiedfamnav.htm">http://www.fljud13.org/divisions_circuitunifiedfamnav.htm</a></p>